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1996

College of New Rochelle
New Rochelle, New York

PHOENIX 1996

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Table of Contents

<i>Title, Author</i>	<i>Page</i>
1. <i>SWFLFSLM</i> , Nicole Casten.....	1
2. <i>Despair</i> , Ese Akopfure.....	2
3. <i>Acquaintances</i> , Jeannine Nault.....	4
4. <i>Love-Hate</i> , Karriann Kolinek.....	5
5. <i>Society's Shame</i> , Dianne Robinson.....	6
6. <i>Reflected Image</i> , Letitie Hepburn.....	7
7. <i>Between Me and My Friend</i> , Monique Hatch.....	8
8. <i>No Nothing</i> , Doris Perez.....	9
9. <i>Why Me!</i> Morenike Clark.....	10
10. <i>The Frame</i> , Jessica Sepulveda.....	11
11. <i>Rubbing Leaves</i> , Paula Pryce.....	12
12. <i>Impression</i> , Orlando Warren.....	13
13. <i>A Nation's Problems</i> , Loretta Blake.....	14
14. <i>Madonna and Child</i> , Meghan Gilroy.....	15
15. <i>Shattered Dreams</i> , Moren Clark.....	16
16. <i>Night Falls</i> , Orlando Warren.....	17
17. <i>What Is In the Darkness?</i> , Lizzette Geigel.....	18
18. <i>GreenEyedLover</i> , Kalunda Jenkins.....	20
19. <i>Ricochet</i> , Nicole Casten.....	22
20. <i>Eugene</i> , Maris Hampton.....	23
21. <i>Every Inch of You</i> , Cynthia Santiago.....	24
22. <i>Untitled</i> , Monique Hatch.....	25
23. <i>All In The Family</i> , Katherine Williams.....	26
24. <i>Brooklyn Babyface</i> , Meghan Gilroy.....	28
25. <i>The Fear</i> , Jeannine Nault.....	29
26. <i>Just A Voice</i> , Alba Negron.....	30
27. <i>My Prayer-His Answer</i> , Cassandra Freeman.....	31
28. <i>Mirror of Life</i> , Paula Pryce.....	32
29. <i>Delivering Spring</i> , Karin Battersby.....	34
30. <i>A Sinner's Song</i> , Naomi Pace.....	35

Table of Contents (continued)

<i>Title, Author</i>	<i>Page</i>
31. <i>Marriage</i> , Maris Hampton.....	36
32. <i>The Strip Tease</i> , Nicole Casten.....	37
33. <i>Remembering</i> , Loraine Martinez.....	39
34. <i>My Fourth Day</i> , Cynthia Santiago.....	40
35. <i>I Am Woman</i> , Shanika Victor.....	41
36. <i>Figured Wrong</i> , Jeannine Nault.....	42
37. <i>Untitled</i> , Meghan Gilroy.....	45
38. <i>Black</i> , Paula Pryce.....	46
39. <i>The Haunting</i> , Cyndia Romulus.....	47
40. <i>The Choice</i> , Oni Pendarvis.....	48
41. <i>The Lonely Flower</i> , Allba Negron.....	49
42. <i>One Night Stand</i> , Oni Pendarvis.....	50
43. <i>Red Day</i> , Jessica Sepulveda.....	51
44. <i>Untitled</i> , Lorelle Graffeo.....	51
45. <i>A Contract With Myself</i> , Missy Egan Wey.....	52
46. <i>Nightmare</i> , Katherine Williams.....	53
47. <i>Tim Murray's Eye and Mouth</i> , Maris Hampto.....	54
48. <i>To Know Him Is To Love Him</i> , Kalunda Jenkins.....	55
49. <i>Another Night</i> , Katherine Williams.....	56
50. <i>The Greatest Man</i> , Cassandra Freeman.....	58
51. <i>Attention</i> , Tamara Rose.....	59
52. <i>Guardian</i> , Letitia Hepburn.....	63
53. <i>Untitled</i> , Meghan Gilroy.....	64
54. <i>Olodumare</i> , Paula Pryce.....	65
55. <i>Love Is Forever</i> , Meagan Batchelder.....	66
56. <i>The Wink</i> , Lyvett Valezquez.....	68
57. <i>Look Into My Eyes</i> , Cyndia Romulus.....	69
58. <i>Untitled (top photo)</i> , Lorelle Graffeo.....	70
59. <i>Untitled (bottom photo)</i> , Lorelle Graffeo.....	70
60. <i>Untitled</i> , Meghan Gilroy.....	71
61. <i>Nada</i> , Orlando Warren.....	72

SWFLFSLM

If you wish to please
Pay close attention
To the laws of the land
My land, ME

Strolls after midnight
Meaningful conversations
Midsummer night swing
Dancing beneath the stars
Cinema, concerts, plays
Soccer on the beach
Picnics at the park
Unexpected, Spontaneous
Friendly, Casual
ENERGETIC

Quiet nights
Of cooing and cuddling
Passionate kisses
Slow BUT intense
Caressing to satisfy
My every need
No need for lovers
Who gnaw and bite
Who tease or mock
Just in spite

Can't bear no
Selfish, egostistic
BASTARD
Need sensitive man
Who can love strongly

But no smothering
Have to breathe
Me doesn't mean
WE

I am searching
For that one charming man
Someone who respects me
For ALL that I am

Who will answer
This personal ad???

Nicole Casten

Despair

You're told when to speak
Yet you're a bird without a beak!
They gave you nothing and yet...
You have to be a leader!

Why do you cry, cry, cry?
Because I have nothing else to try!
You can walk...just go...
But where, Mama, where?

They pretend to love you
But really they're just saying "Boo!"
And when they hate you
That's when you should start saying "Coo, Coo!"

I have to be strong...oh so strong
But when I'm right, I'm really wrong.
They're good at pretending...
Yet that's just the beginning!

Did you forget your baby?
They made promises, didn't they?
A shame you had to suffer
But...baby, you have to cover.

My tears are like the rain...
They come again and again!
They say that I'm free...
But my wings have been cut off!

To be happy is a mystery
To be sad is easy!
To smile, I have to be happy
But they'll see it as just another crime!

"Honey, we don't mean to hurt you!"
But they laughed when they said that.
I have to be slick, just like a cat.
And when I'm gone, I'll be saying "Boo!"

Something's gone wrong...so very wrong
Honey, your mother's gone!
They tried to comfort me
But at the same time, they threw away the key!

I see it...I see the light.
But why is it so bright?
And every step I take...
Is a step they re-take!

Baby, just chill...chill!
But every word they cried, "Kill, Kill."
I became their puppet
So all they had to do was pull the strings!

They made me dance, cry, yell, laugh
And when it was over,
They shut me up again.

Keep your eyes closed...very tight
And then maybe you won't see the light.
You saw the light,
And that's why they yell, "Kill."

It won't be over.
They have several more generations to go.
But...baby, you just have to cover.
And remember the best word is "no."

And so He said,
"Laugh no more, friends applaud, the comedy is over!"

Ese Akpofure

Acquaintances

A youth will die by the night
of the third sun,
struck by midnight
and left to be taken,
Patriotic soldiers
take his mind,
as white stallions neigh
beneath a black moon,
Death was sweet
and unsuspecting,
Swiftly flying
she carries him away,
Into the black moon she rides
with a trail of stars behind her,
One star for each third sun
and all its acquaintances.

Jeannine Nault

Love-Hate

Love, created above.
Hate, living of late.
Love, brought by a dove.
Hate, wanting to wait.
Love, what I am thinking of.
Hate, don't want to relate.
Love, when push comes to shove.
Hate, a beautiful trait.
Love, it's him that I love.
Hate, it's him that I hate.

Karrieann Kolinek

Society's Shame

Oh no! No God Please!

(Were the words that echoed in the cool dark breeze, as a mother
was told that her son would never get to grow old.)

He was only seventeen (so very young).

He was taken from her, her baby.

Her son.

Another youth killed - someone's child slain.

Was his life in vain?

No not if, "KEEP GUNS FROM OUR KIDS"

becomes our refrain.

To Dwayne's mother (and all mothers whose young sons
to rest have been lain)

Your boys will be remembered as part of Society's Shame.

Written in memory of Dwayne Cotton

Dianne Robinson

Reflected Image

Shadow of mine,
 shadow of my being
Your reflection silhouettes the frame of my body,
casting a brief darkness on the earthly surroundings
 of my life.
walk with me in the path of my past and future...
meditate with me during the quietness of my day and night
 and
strive with me to reach the goals of my destiny.
Be with me not only during the light of sunny day,
but also during the darkness of my night
 and
perhaps in some miraculous way,
Overshadow the clouds of a stormy day.
Stand with me,
 in front of me or in back of me
 but
forever be...
Shadow of mine,
 shadow of my being

Letitia Hepburn

Between Me And My Friend

We should have never crossed those lines
What things could happen? All different kinds
The dark corners of my heart only you know
Never cross those lines we shouldn't go.
Until now I didn't know how deeply you cared.
Until forever you'll never know they were shared.
The words were spoken and at the very end
I still love all of you 'cause you are First My Best Friend.

Monique Hatch

No Nothing

No sunlight, no rainbows
no smiles to make my pain go
Rosaries draped around me
dry blood all inside me
no tears, no laughter
feel nothing, but disaster
no beauty, no rain
no cold, no pain
no Love, no fate
feel nothing but Hate
no white, no blue
it was me you knew
no she, no he
no I, for thee...

Doris Perez

Why Me!

Look at them
Expressions run across their face
They observe one of our actions
Look at their race, a big disgrace.
They follow us around the market
As if we have no change
We can't even cross the streets
without a policeman requesting our names
He said/She said roam around the place
Look at that black man!
A disgrace to the race
We are all of one creed
Just difference in shade
Must you hold this against us
For life we are bonded in chains.

Morenike Clarke

The Frame

Looking at a frame from a distance, not able to see it clearly,
The shiny gold border, around a vision known so dearly,
Looking at this young woman, and the contours of her face,
Her soft white skin, her long white dress, trimmed in white lace,
Her smile, a subtle expression of her loving happiness and joy,
Behind her beautiful image is a regretful decoy,
I can't see how this person, could actually be me,
On a frame high above my old chimney.

Jessica Sepulveda

Rubbing Leaves

Thought of you today
as I watched the trees in their
various shades of splendor
I wondered if you missed my touch
and my breath, the wind through your
pine needles
I wondered if you missed
the burn of my bush
my body's two prominent branches
and my trunk.

I miss you. I miss the feel of you
I miss the scents of you lapping
my sap and tapping into me to
retrieve my natural mapleness.
How wonderful it feels to have you
stroking my roots,
forcing me to grow.
The continuum brings
my bark to you.

Rubbing leaves with you
is my favorite experience.

I wonder what
our rings will say of us when we perish
...if we perish.

Will we continue to grow on the mountain
like we promised?
Let's dance in our life's breath
and take refuge in Nature's blessings.
love never lets our branches go bare...
not even with the changing of the seasons.

May the Life-force
that brought us here
to this particular forest,
in this space and time,
give us health, strength
and all the essentials
we will need to survive.

Listen to the wind when it rustles
through your leaves
don't be alarmed
it's only me
whispering to you.
I just have one request...

Do not uproot yourself.

Paula Pryce

Impression

Beauty is seldom what it seems
Like an impressionist painting,
it is best observed from a distance.
Proximity distorts.
And suddenly it is not beauty at all but globs and splashes
of one's own creation.
This is how it seemed-how it seemed to me.
Then I saw you-saw you-first from a distance, saw your perfect
lines indelibly etched into the
space you filled.
I sighed.
Then I moved closer-not only to see if your image would change,
but also to listen-listen for
sounds of wisdom.
No your image did not change.
If anything, it was more finely etched than I had dreamed.
But it wasn't your surface beauty that
changed me, made me delve further into myself than I had ever
gone; it was your wisdom and inner strength,
as well as the sound of your voice, painting decimal brush strokes
across the room.
These are the things I will remember long after your image
has faded.

Orlando Warren

A Nation's Problems

The streets are not paved with gold,
Nor the stars so easy to reach,
But surely you and I can create
 the way the world will one day be.
Inflation soars up to the sky,
Employment sinks into the ground.
Thieves and beggars are reborn,
 the monsters created by a so-called society.

Enlisting men and women for a war
 cannot solve the nation's uproaring crisis.
An inexplorable force in the cosmos demands,
 that all heads and minds converge.
Rebellion is everywhere in sight,
How do we expect to settle down?
In this modern polluted world,
 implanted with hate, envy and more hate.

The Master is the only source,
 to rid the nations of themselves,
Bent on self destruction, they cannot see,
No one, no one will be left to reap.

Loretta Blake



"Untitled" Meghan Gilroy

Shattered Dreams

Sometimes I wonder how my life would be
If my education were snatched
From under my feet
I once had dreams of becoming the best
But the government decided
To put me through a test
America the beautiful
Let the truth be told
If you're black like me
The title is cold
My career has drifted
To the government's hand
While my life sinks in the bottomless sand
I have no chance
For I am poor
Satan taunts me, by knocking at my door
Pounding and pounding that I am weak
Unemployed I will be
Public assistance you shall seek
Money to man
Is the power in his hand
Lives like mine, have no possibility
Protest and march as we can see
Is zing to the government
As lemon in a cup of tea
Sour to the taste
When they approach our face
Disgusted by our race
And the hardships we have faced
Which still continue as life goes on
No need in hiding
The blinders have vanished
Because of my chocolate skin
I am put through anguish...

Morenike Clarke

Night Falls

Night falls and I am
again...alone.
The darkness, the darkness
is so dense I must peel it back,
parting it like a curtain.

Somewhere, somewhere in the
invisible you stand, stripping
the day from you.
Like skins, like layers, falling
and piling, your disrobing
builds and soon you are bare and
near me, silent, except for
your breath.

Somewhere in the darkness,
your lips part--a mist
(dew-like...invisible, yet
perceptible) forms on them.
Your mouth speaks and loves
and I hear and am loved by it.
Somewhere in the distance, I
fall into your warmth.
There I bathe in your fire,
destroyed and renewed.

That was you, that was me--
yes, that was us.
Now, alone, fragmented I
grasp at shadows, pretending you are here,
your limbs about me, firm
as granite, liquid as lava.
Night falls and I am
again...alone.

Orlando Warren

What Is In The Darkness.

The darkness seemed almost alive. To her it felt like a thing with a mind of its own, devouring everything, especially her will to live and any hope of a reprieve from this never ending darkness. Suddenly, she heard voices outside the cell and the door opened, the light nearly blinding her. She covered her face and heard one of the guards growl something to his companion before someone was roughly shoved into the cell. The door shut once again plunging her into the inky blackness.

"What the hell is this place?" her new cellmate asked. From his voice she could tell that he was in pain and trying not to show it. "Where are you?" She didn't answer because she was afraid. It wouldn't be the first time that a spy had been put into a cell to get information from a prisoner. "I'm not a spy and I'm not going to hurt you."

Something in his voice made her decide to trust him. "It's not that big of a cell so you should be able to find me easily." He did and came to sit next to her. His breathing was labored and she guessed it was from pain more than anything else. "They worked you over, huh? I guess I got lucky by being a girl. They don't usually rough up girls, they do other things to them instead. But I got lucky in that respect as well."

"Do they usually do this? Are there two people in every cell?"

"No, it's very rare, so it means one of us is going to be killed as soon as they find it convenient," she said matter of factly.

"How can you be sure that one of us is going to die?"

"This is hell and they don't like us to have anything to call our own. Not even a cell mate. It's their way of trying to break us, you know." They were both silent for a time, each lost in their own thoughts. She couldn't help but wonder who he was, why he was there and what he looked like. But she knew better than to ask. In this place it was better not to know. If you know too much about each other it only hurts more when one or the other was killed.

"Do they always keep it dark?" he asked finally. When she didn't answer, he thought she was killed. "You're not asleep are you?"

"You sound like you can't wait to die."

She gave a short bark of laughter. "They think that the darkness prepares us for death. But it isn't like that at all you see. When they finally get around to killing us, we'll have the last laugh. We'll be free and able to bask in the eternal light." She sighed and pulled her knees to her chest. "Are you afraid?"

"Afraid of what? This place?" he asked, but she didn't answer. "Don't ask me questions and then refuse to help me understand them!"

"Death. Does it frighten you? I'm not afraid you know. In a way I look forward to it. I'll be getting out of this place at least." They were both silent for a while and she soon dozed off. She woke to him softly singing a part of an old song. "Good-bye blue sky, good-bye," she finished softly. "That's very fitting."

"Don't you ever hope that the war will end and we'll be freed? I can't think that we'll die in this place. It would drive me mad, you know."

"Then you'd be one of the lucky ones. I've been here longer than I can count. There will be no rescue. For all we know the war could be over and we're just being left to rot here."

"That's not true! I was fighting in the war when I was taken. We're close to victory. I just know we'll be free soon."

She sat there silently. The darkness robbed them of their sight but they could hear and sense one another's movements and she knew he was going to put his arm around her. Under ordinary circumstances she would have resisted and found another corner to sit in, but she felt a sudden need for human contact. "If they kill you, what will you regret not doing?" he asked.

"Knowing what it's like to be held by a lover and know his intimate caress." They both fell silent and she fell asleep, her head pillowed on his chest. The darkness was like that, it gave them nothing to look forward to except their dreams of other places and other times. Sometimes it seemed like the dreams were reality and the darkness only a dream.

"Would you really miss never feeling a lover's embrace?" he asked forcing her out of her dreams. "I would think you would miss life."

"Life? There is no life for me anymore. There's only this eternal blackness that eats away my soul. Even though we're together, we're alone. I can hear you and feel you, but we are each isolated in this darkness." She felt the light brush of his fingers over her hair and shuddered. It was filthy and matted from not being washed or combed since before she'd come there. Yet he stroked it as if it was the silky mane of hair she remembered herself having. "If I'm the one they kill, will you remember me?"

"I will only remember a voice in the darkness. I have nothing else to remember you by."

He thought about that for a moment, then made his decision. He'd give her a way to remember him by as well as fulfill her last living wish.

"You will have something to remember me by," he said softly. She touched his clean-shaven face and wondered if he'd live long enough to actually grow a beard. Her fingers found his lips and she kissed him. She let her passions take over as they let their hands explore each other and form mental pictures of one another. The darkness seemed to aid them in their urgency. It pressed upon them like a heavy weight that would not be ignored, much like their passion.

After a time their cries of passion ceased and they both slept, their limbs entwined like an art sculpture. The intrusion of light in their cell woke them. "Get the girl," one of the guards said. Before the guard could yank her free of her companion's embrace, she turned and whispered to him, "I am afraid, but I will think of you and have courage."

She felt a hot rush of tears building up in her eyes and quickly turned away not wanting him to see the full extent of her fear.

"What is your name?" he asked as the guard started to pull her out of the cell.

"Otani!" she cried and then she was gone. He couldn't help but wonder if he would end up like her, seeking a friend in the darkness and finding only death's cold embrace waiting.

Lizzette Geigel

GreenEyedLover

Starry night
Guide me to a place up high
Take me on a trip
On the freeway
in a green Cadillac
Drop me off in a place heavenlier than where I'm at
So I can explore
And expand
my horizons

Bright moon
Lead me to water
I promise to drink
My life is already out of synch
I can sink or swim
sink or swim
Either way
I just want my head to spin
Promise me a rainbow of color
A demon I have yet to discover
Who just might be my green eyed lover

Clear sky
With intelligence far greater than mine
Keep your vision from being cloudy
Unlike my eyes of red wine
Drop me off a safe haven
Where I can be
Be aggressive
Be shy
Just don't bring me down from my high
Let me testify

to my own experience

Crows as black as me
Carry my black soul
back to where I can see
With no added stimuli to suppress my nerves
Why can't my caw be heard?
I've got to be more diplomatic
Or pack a semi-automatic to be who I've got to be
But for now I'll simply drink and be merry
And do what I've got to do to keep my eyes of cherry
So I can make it through the day
Make it through the night
And back to the starry sky where I took flight

The black sky that scares me
Like the sight of my face
I don't need the mind trip
So I'll take five dollars just in case
I can't deal with the images on my own
My green eyed friend never leaves me alone
But uplifts me like a gift

Laughter in my smile
Takes me back to the Jewel of the Nile
that I used to be
Facing me
Facing me
Facing me

Kalunda Jenkins

RICOCHET

cAnT tHiNk
hEaD hUrTs
cOnFuSiOn ALL aRoUnD
dOnT fEeL mUcH
oF aNyThInG
wAnT tO bE hApPy
jUsT cAnT

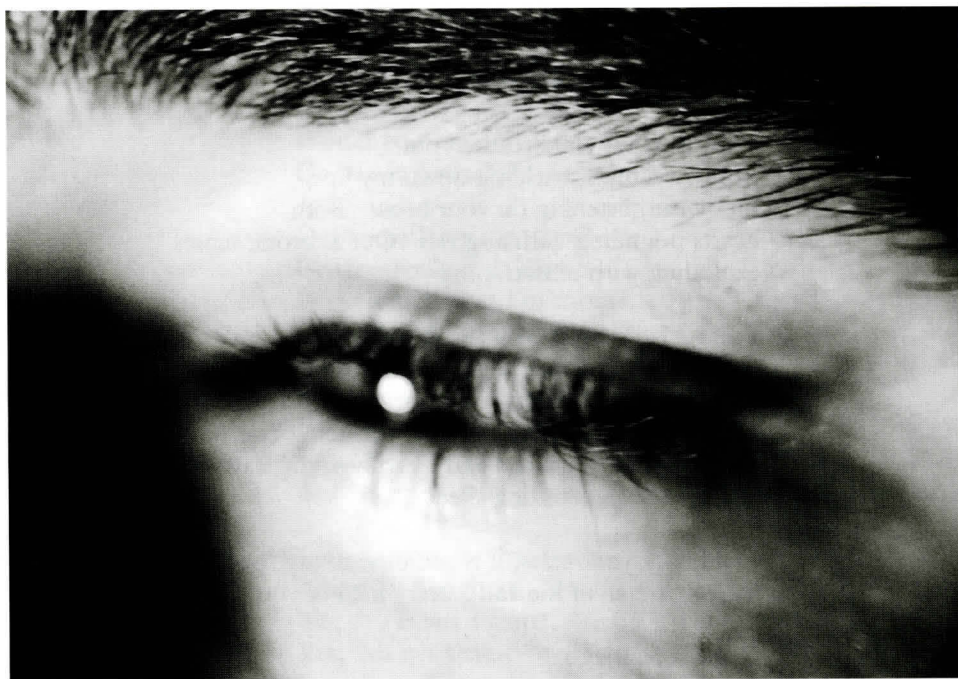
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aNd Go
mUsT fInD mY wAy
gOt To CoNtRoL
wHeEl Is SpInNiNg
cAnT sTeEr
mUsT fInD dIrEcTiOn

wOrDs CoMe OuT
fRaGmEnTeD sEnTeNcEs
iNeXpLiCaBlE
bItS aNd PiEcEs
bLuRtEd OuT
sOrRy NoT aLl YoU
bUt Me

yEaRs Of LiViNg
aLoNe HaS cAuGhT uP
fEeLiNgS eXpLoDe
uRgEs HaRd
tO HaNdLe
dAnGeRoUs TeRrItOrY

bOuNcInG oFF ThE wAlls
sCrEaMs UnAnSwErEd
tErRoR fIlLs My BeInG
fEaR cReEpS iN
cAnT bE aTtAcHeD
nO iNvOlVeMeNt
aFrAiD tO lOvE
aNoThEr
tO cArE, tO tRuSt
iS rIsKy
nOt ReAdY
cAnT dEaL wItH
pAiN
eXpErIeNcInG tUrBuLeNcE
a HuSh
sIlEnCe SpReAds
eNd MeChAnIcAl
pRoBlEmS
i Am
a DeFeCt

Nicole Casten



"Eugene" Maris Hampton

Every Inch of You

I breathed in, you breathed out.
Your sweetness, trickling down my lips,
the sweat glistening on your brow. Both
hearts pounding with anguish. Our neurotic senses
exploding with sensation.

I said, "Let's sleep." You said, "Hold me...don't
let me go." Our hands guiding us through it, "But
slowly, please, I want to read between the lines. I
want to dance with you in your secrets." You want to
cling to my every word and I finally said, "leave me
still in your penetrating silence."

Hold back your tears, it is not time to say "good-bye,"
for you are all of me and I every inch of you.

Cynthia Santiago

Untitled

Did you ask me my Name?
Did you say you're all the same?
Do you care what I think?
Would you say I'm a blank?

Did you ask me my Name?
Or if I like to play games?
Would you care if I said no?
Or would you tell me to go?

Did you ask me my name?
Or who really is to Blame.
Do you care what I'm about?
Or are you with me for my clout?

Did you ask me my name
We're not all the same
Would you believe I have feelings
And they are more important than any business dealings

You didn't care what I said.
And now I am here...Dead!
No, this is not a game,
Yes, this is a shame.

Did you ask me my Name?

Monique Hatch

All In The Family

Paul

Oh, boy. I've really done it this time. Oh, Man. Oh...this really takes the cake. How am I going to explain this to Lisa? It's all a misunderstanding. That's all it is. Really.

If only Julie hadn't started talking back. It wasn't her place. She knows how I am when I get angry.

If only Julie hadn't gone into my closet and snooped through my things. If only she hadn't found the grass I stashed there. I mean, it's none of her business. I don't go snooping around in her things. Well, I did that one time, but I was positive she was having an affair. I knew it, I just needed proof. I just never found anything. She hid it really well.

And after she goes through my things, she has the nerve to come up and tell me what she's found-after the day I've had. All I want when I get home after a hard day is sit down with a nice cold beer and watch some T.V. All I want is my dinner ready for me. Is that too much to ask? I think not. I come home, the dinner isn't defrosted, there's no beer, and Julie is nowhere to be found. That's gratitude for ya. Gee, I even told her to get beer this morning before I left.

So I went upstairs, thinking she was pulling this "migraine" crap again. She always does that. She's so lazy, she'll use any excuse to get out of doing her fair share of work. Anyway, just as I got up to the top of the stairs, she came out with this look on her face. You know that kind. The look that says, "you're in big trouble now, mister." Anyway, she started yelling at me, "why haven't you thrown this stuff away? I thought you gave this up; what if Lisa sees you doing this?" She just kept going like the Energizer Bunny. So I shut her up. I told her off big time. I showed her who's boss of this house. I mean, there's only so much you can take from one person. Anyway, one thing lead to another, and she forced me to push her. Not very hard, of course, just enough to teach her a lesson. But the idiot lost her footing, and down she went, head over heel, down the stairs. It was actually kind of funny, when you think about it.

Lisa. I forgot about Lisa. That's her I think I hear. Bawling, just like a little cry-baby. God, will she never shut up? Who's she talking to? Oh, my God. She called 911. How many times do I have to tell her family business is private? Get off the phone, Lisa! Lisa! Did you hear me? That's better.

Sirens. Too late. How long was she on the phone? I'll have to talk to her about that later. The ambulance guys are here. And the police. She really pulled out all the stops this time. I'll just explain to those pigs she slipped and fell. That's all. The end. They know how it is. They'll understand. After all, I'm just one of the guys, right?

Julie

Look at him. Look at him standing there. He's just pushed me down the stairs, plunging me to my death, and he doesn't even look sorry.

Look at me. The son-of-a-bitch broke my neck. And my leg. I can see it tucked underneath me. If I were alive, I'd be in a lot of pain. I can't feel anything.

Oh, my god. Lisa. Lisa, get out of here. No, don't come over here! Go hide! Run to the neighbors! Anything! Don't come over here!

My baby. Oh, my baby. I can't even comfort you. I can't hold you, I can't even kiss your tears away...Oh, Lisa, you're breaking my heart.

I'll kill you Paul! I'll send you to Hell to rot there for an eternity...

Why didn't I leave him when I had the chance? Why didn't I take Lisa and run? I could have stayed with Mom. It would have been all right. I know it.

But, oh, how I loved him. I still do. After all, he is the father of my child. He always made

sure there was food on the table and clothes on our backs. He was so sweet. He used to send flowers to me every Thursday when we were dating. Roses. A dozen. All red. My favorite. When he proposed, he took me down to the beach. It was midnight, and the moon was full. We walked along for a while, playing in the waves, splashing around. Then he got down on one knee, right there in the water, and asked me to marry him. I was swept off my feet. No one had ever treated me like that before. He treated me like a queen. I never knew I could feel that way. I never imagined his temper would be so bad. But really, it wasn't his fault. He's a redhead. You know what they say about redheads. Anyway, I made vows. I couldn't leave him. "Til death do us part."

You bastard, Paul! I thought you loved me!

Sirens. The police. Lisa! My baby. Good girl. Do you know how proud Mommy is of you? You were brave enough to do what Mommy never could. Oh, Lisa. Mommy will take care of you. Some way. Some how.

Lisa

Stop it! Stop it! I hate it when Mommy and Daddy fight! They're always so loud. Then Daddy gets even louder, and even angrier...

I think it's time Peepers and I went to our special hiding place. The Closet. Not just any closet, but the closet beneath the stairs. Peepers and I will be safe there. Better grab a couple of cookies. Peepers gets hungry in there. In the dark. Good thing Peepers isn't afraid of the dark, cause I am. But Peepers keeps me safe.

My teddy bear, Peepers, isn't afraid of anything. When Mommy says not to say another peep, he always says "peep" as soon as Mommy turns around. That's how he got his name.

Uh-oh. Thunks. Many thunks. Right over my head. Maybe Mommy kicked the laundry down the stairs. She does that when they yell. Let's go out. Maybe Mommy needs help picking up the laundry. It's probably all over the floor. That's what happens when you kick it down the stairs.

Why is Mommy taking a nap at the bottom of the stairs? She won't even let me take a nap on the couch! Mommy. Mommy. Wake up. Mommy. Please. You're scaring Peepers. *Mommy!*

Oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no...

Mommy won't wake up. Mommy needs help. Daddy? No. He was being mean again. He pushed her. Mean Daddy.

What do I do?

911!

Like the show on T.V.! Okay. Gotta remember. Nine is only a six upside down. Double sticks. I did it!

Hello? My Daddy pushed my Mommy down the stairs and she won't wake up. They were yelling, but Daddy was being mean again. Yes, I know where I live--364 Rosy Way. Yes, my Daddy's still here. Please hurry. My Mommy's lips are all blue, and she didn't have any blue popsicles today! I have to go keep Mommy company now. Bye!

Mommy, please wake up. Mommy. Mommy. I'm scared. I love you, Mommy. Please wake up. I'm hungry, you have to make me dinner. You said you'd read to me tonight. You promised. You *have* to wake up! You promised!

Sirens! Mommy, sirens! Police and ambulance people! You'll be okay now, Mommy. Please be okay...Mommy?

Katherine Williams



"Brooklyn Babyface" Meghan Gilroy

The Fear

Daddy was always around
standing over me like a cloud
with fists as fast as guns
whenever he thought I
was having too much fun
a figure of anything but love
never a sign of peace like a dove
more of a bull's rage
as if he spent his life
locked in a blackened cage
no one to teach him
wrong from right
taught only to fight
never learned how to care
after the woman
had entered his lair
soon his anger she knew
but she didn't know
what the hell she should do
'cause now
she has to think for two
and the fear sets in
and the air
is starting to get thin
as the lights go dim
when he finds out
where she's been
knocks her off her feet
again
then
she reaches for another valium.

Jeannine Nault

Just A Voice

The phone rings;
And the voice on the other end
Inquires about how I was doing,
Then asks to come see me,
And I agree with delight.
But the phone stops ringing,
And the voice on the other end remains
Just a voice.

Unexpectedly, the phone rings again.
It's that same voice from long ago,
Making promises it can't keep.
Makes no difference now if I see
Where this voice is coming from:
I'll be distraught for a few days,
But eventually it would become
Just a voice...
Again.

Alba Negrón

My Prayer

You see my pain
Help me.
My tears fall like rain
Love me.
You touch my broken heart
Hold me.
With the loving magic that you have
Heal me.
You know my sadness
Restore me.
You are my friend
Share my life with me.

His Answer

I see your pain
Let me help you.
Your tears are not shame
Let me love you.
I reach for your heart
Trust me.
With my love your wounds will heal
Come to me.
I know your sadness
Let me restore you.
I'll be your friend if you let me
Share your life with me.

Cassandra Freeman

Mirror of Life

I look in the mirror
and stare at my reflection.
I am an African Woman
by way of the Caribbean, Panama
and America.
I love what I see
this nakedness, this roundness
this fullness, this sensuousness.

I danced with many spirits
and chose this one to live with
and this is my house that I have
chosen in which to reside.

I look in the mirror
and stare at an Earth Mother,
a Queen, a protector, a nurturer.
My skin tells my tales by its
honey colored hue.

Once I was mahogany,
I was blue black, I was ebony
but time moves on.
I ceased physically and have returned
over many generations
changing my appearance each time.
My eyes are brown and speak of
the old soul that lies within.
I am happy to be the
Earth Mother and the Nature
that I am.

I look in the mirror
and know that I am here to gain knowledge,
to overcome obstacles, to aid others
on their quests for self-realization and
feast on life accomplishments.

My breasts hang low
and I realize that it is because
I have given life to so many.
All of my children continue to come and go
I continue to nurse them
with the milk of love, strength,
acknowledgment, reasoning
and so much more

I have yet to be sucked dry.

I've searched for my companion
My Earth Father, My King,
My African Warrior and Magician.
I've found him.

He is everything I have
ever wanted in a companion.
We met at the beginning of time
and continually manage to
find one another
during each life cycle
even though it may take
many, many years.
He is the only **One**
I have ever allowed to suckle
my being along with my children.

I look through the mirror
and see what lies ahead...
our existence.

He plants his hands
over my ears
and I know that for now
he must hear for me.
He must translate his words into actions.
for I am not one for reading lips anymore.

My Earth Father is standing
behind me
taking in the view
loving me with his eyes,
heart and soul.
My Warrior is at my side
ready
to protect me, guide me
and to practice with me.
My Magician encompasses me
touches me, reaches for me.
He is ever present
and I will always love
our reflection.

Paula Pryce

Delivering Spring

The winter's falling snow will mask the ground
The joy sublime of flowers newly bloomed,
Is there a hope of color to be found?
The anxious smiles of waiting children loom.

The cold does dampen when we can run free
Re-birth of sweet, soft petals now arise,
And joyous children bask in warmth with glee
It's time for fun and children's playground cries.

The air is filled with March's rose perfume,
The melting snow gives a time to reflect,
Getting rid of all of winter's gloom,
Our world again is set to be perfect.

The sun's prism gives off the color blue,
Delivering spring for both me and you.

Karin Battersby

A Sinner's Song

Where have all the angels gone?
Please return to sing your song

We cannot, the angels cry
Sad are we, so say goodbye

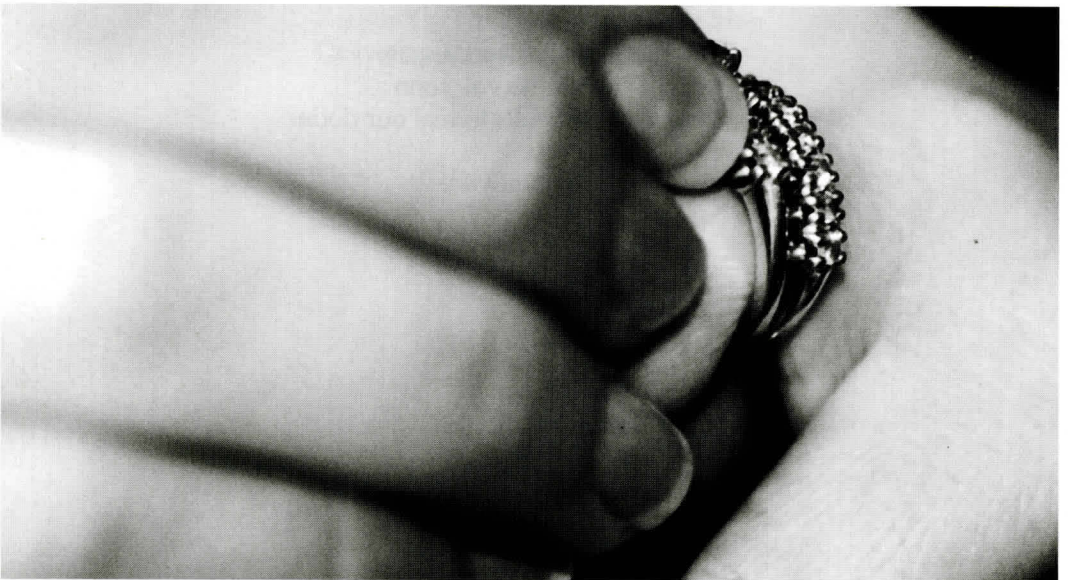
We promise to be good again!
Please come back forgotten friend!

We cannot, the angels pout
Gone are we a different route
Evil dark has come along
Vanquishing our happy song
Sad are we to leave you here
Sinners prepare to greet your fears

Farewell, sweet angels
We'll miss you soon
When darkness falls to seal our doom

Naomi Pace

“Marriage” Maris Hampton
Segment #1



"Marriage" Maris Hampton
Segment #2



The Strip Tease

Gently and seductively
Place your hands on the skin
Then dig your nails
Deep into its livelihood

Rip and tear
layer after layer
Until it stands naked
Ready for the final confrontation

There he lies
The humiliated
But tasty orange

Shameless are we
Who love to suck
The life out of
Poor defenseless fruit

It tries to fight
Its deadly squirt
Blinds us
With its bitter juices

Like acid it seeps within
The sensation of burning
Kicks in
Too bad, it's only temporary

Its only weapon
Becomes quickly dismantled
And the big O
Is ready for the invasion

His cousins
The apple and the grapefruit
Also must suffer
The same fate

The grapefruit is more durable
Its thick layer of clothing
Protects and defends
The security blanket is appreciated

However, the tender apple
Doesn't have that luxury
Her peel is thin
And easily torn

We rush to escape
And flee the murder scene
The convicting evidence
Stains our hands

The distinctive sweet smell
Cannot be mistaken
Just as the blood spilled from man
Cannot be confused with that of an animal

Yet who can resist such sweetness
That flows within
The sensuous juices squeezed
From its sad soul?

Nicole Casten

Remembering

She waits for him everyday.
Her life is consumed with him
Need to remember the way he
Looked on that last day.

He was very handsome, but
All that remains now is a
Photograph taken years before,
Right before he left her,
She aches inside and wonders
 "Does he love me?"
 "Does he remember I exist?"

Sometimes she regrets not
Trying to remember him better.
She feels like a fool because
It seems he'll never
Come back for her.

He Was Her Protector.

Loraine Martinez

"My Fourth Day"

I could never see the light, darkness is where I centered.

Close your eyes, hear the silence, see the spark glitter ahead and touch your soul.

Feel the freedom that surrounds you inside and out. Let yourself go of all despair and regret; Believe in yourself and only yourself, but do not let faith pass you by.

Open your arms wide and let love into your life; Have hope and only good things will await you.

For when all this is accomplished you will see a light you thought you never had but was there all along—you will see GOD!

Cynthia Santiago

I Am Woman

In 1920 I received the right to vote
To me that was a dream, only a hope

Next I will be sitting in the President's chair
No one would have ever thought of me sitting there

Before you know it my daughters will be there too
Doing the things I never imagined they could do

To my children, I am a mother with plenty of love and care
To the society that once held me down, I am its worst nightmare

To the male doctor and lawyer, I am the one who will soon hold his job
And to the plain man, I am the one who will make his life hard

To the male chauvinist, I am the one who will soon drive him crazy
And to a slogan, I am the words "We've come a long way, Baby!"

So for all of you who try to hold me down, move out of my way, I have much
more to explore!
Who am I? *I AM WOMAN, HEAR ME ROAR!*

Shanika Victor

Figured Wrong

The sharp clicking of the figure's heels is the only audible sound. No breath can be heard, nor sensed. Just a simple slim black shadow creeping through the dark hallways searching for the victim.

No. That door leads towards the research lab. Nothing there at this hour, except papers.

Maybe this one would lead to the senator's office. Wrong...again. How about this entrance...No, a supply closet.

A slick black-gloved hand slowly reaches towards the figure's side and finds the desired object. A quick rustling noise follows the movement as the intruder glances over the map with a flashlight.

Figures. Wrong building.

Several minutes (or perhaps hours) later, the figure is entering the correct building (or at least it seems). Only time, and trying all of the doors, will tell otherwise.

Down this corridor. Take a left. Up this flight of stairs. Two doors down.

Wasted a lot of time. Now it's after midnight.

Proceed down this hallway, then take next right down that hallway. Seventh door on the left.

Nope. Another supply closet. However, this one's occupied.

"Oh, excuse me. Uh, carry on."

Damn! Sevens and ones always look the same.

Standing in front of the correct door (hopefully), the intruder proceeds to withdraw a long black object from the side pocket of the black garments that cloak the figure's figure. A key miraculously appears in the figure's right hand as the left one continues to grasp the long black object.

A light shines from underneath the door marked: Senator Marshall Wilson.

Need to unlock and open the door. Need to free hands to do so. Simply place that there.

The left hand leans the long black object against the door. Then, once free, it helps the other hand unlock the locked door.

A gentle push and the door swings open. Also, the long black object falls with a deafening slap against the tiled floor.

Oooops.

"Who's there?" a low voice questions.

The intruder silently approaches the low voiced person.

"That's not your concern right now, Senator Wilson," the intruder says, somewhat convincingly.

"I'm not Senator Wilson and I think I *should* concern myself with who you are. You sound familiar. Do I know you?" questions the low voice.

"Until you tell me who you are, I can't say as to whether or not I know you," the intruder quickly blurts, rather nervously.

"That's not your concern," the low voice throws back in retort.

Damn. More mind games. Wasting a lot more time. This was supposed to be done at eleven, according to the instruction sheet. Well, it can't hurt to play for a few more minutes in comparison to the wasted hours.

"Very cute," speaks the intruder, in a curt manner.

"I thought so. But you still haven't told me who you are or why you are in the senator's office," the low voice says as the person rises.

"Why should I answer to you? How do I know that you aren't...an intruder! Yeah, and you're here to do something awful like...assassinate the senator! Answer me that," replies the intruder.

The low voiced person steps forward and stands in the only available light in the otherwise extremely dark office.

"Why so silent? I showed you my face, you can show me yours," the low voice whispers, gruffly.

"Why don't we get to know eachother first? Maybe a little small talk first before we jump into anything," the intruder says in the hopes to stall for enough time to figure out who is the other person.

Suddenly the low voiced person steps out of the light and to the side where the intruder cannot see anymore because of the darkness.

Damn. Need to be more alert. This one is tricky.

The intruder is becoming desperate.

"Just tell me who you are, or else I'll be forced to take drastic measures!" screeches the intruder at the low voiced person.

"Come to think of it, you sound very much like someone I know...Someone I know very well," says the low voiced person as the sound towards the intruder becomes louder and louder until the low voiced person is standing near the intruder.

The intruder begins to feel the sweat creeping across a very nervous brow. A shaky hand carefully wipes the perspiration away. Then, realization hits (and boy, does that hurt).

"Howard? Is that you?" questions the intruder.

"Claire? What are you doing here? You're supposed to be taking the kids away for a while. At least that's what the note on the kitchen table said! I thought you were never going to come back. At least that's what I was hoping for," says Howard as he grabs his wife's upper arm.

"But why are you here?... Didn't you get the note I left you?" Howard frantically questions.

"Yes. I took the note that said to go to the senator's office, assassinate him with a blunt object (found in shed) and then disappear for a while," recites Claire, taking out the note and trying to sort out this little mishap.

"You imbecil. That note was for me! My note for you said that I was leaving you. Geez, you never get anything right!" Howard screams in a frustrated frenzy.

"Well, don't get upset about it! I was hoping that you wouldn't be out at all hours of the night, like you always do, without an explanation as to where you're going. I don't care if you do come home with more money on the nights you stay out. All the money in the world isn't worth the equivalent of having an actual husband. I even arranged for the kids to go away for the weekend so we could try to work things out. I called that number at the bottom of the note that you left for me on the table. You know, the one with the...Italian name...next to it..." Claire says in a shaky manner.

"Wait a minute. You mean those guys who came for Carol and Brian weren't your uncles?" Howard says in a quizzical fashion.

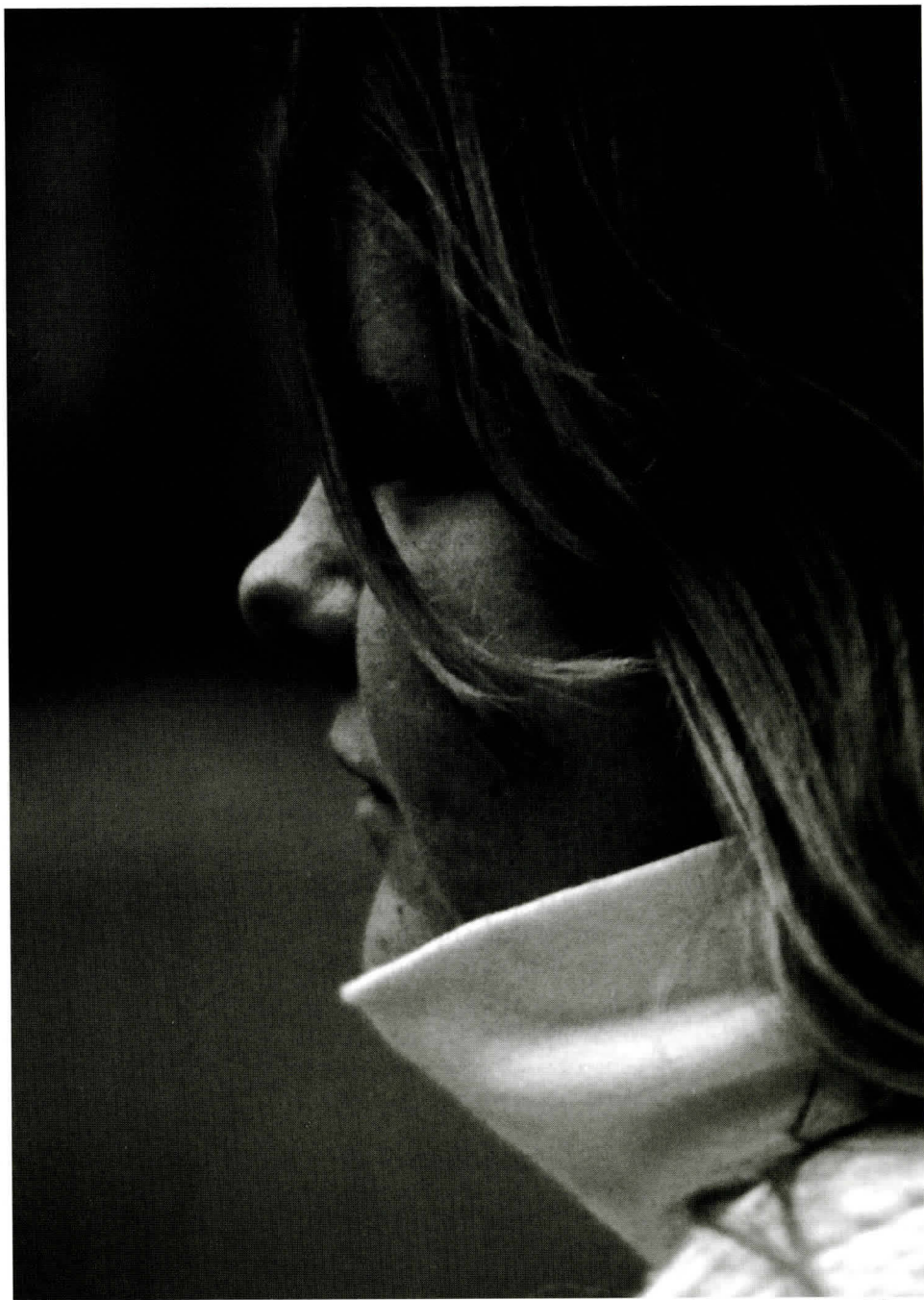
Claire and Howard both look at each other and once again realization hits them (Ouch, quit realizing things!)

They slowly turn towards each other, each with their blunt objects in black-gloved hands, and begin to swing.

"Gee, Chief, I have no idea how this could have happened. I'm just glad that the Senator is in Hawaii during this mess. He wouldn't want to have to deal with this mess. If this was supposed to be a professional job, it's lacking a lot. It's obvious, according to the instructions, that one of these two clowns was sent to assassinate the Senator on the seventh when he returned from vacation. But I still don't understand how they could have mixed up the first of the month with the seventh? What do you think, Chief Corelli?" the rookie says.

"I think I need a vacation more than that lazy Senator does."

Jeannine Nault



"Untitled" Meghan Gilroy

Black

My eyes focus everyday
on a hue
not foreign to me.
It surrounds me,
covers my existence
a reflection of the Eternal Creator.
Flesh and bones,
spirit and thought,
blood and matter,
they are all housed here.

Ancestral voices muzzled in the bellies
of ships still speak
but their rainbows
continue to go unnoticed by so many.
It is not a color that blends,
void of light
a shadow cast on a moonlight night.

It is what I am
The color of my skin
my tie that won't bind...
my deep dark Ebony ribbon.

Paula Pryce

The Haunting

I guess this is when I start to imagine you before me...Bring you
into my world. Into my world.

Those broad legs, your long fingers on those large, masculine
hands...Yes, this is when I visualize an embrace so filled with the
energy from your arms that I get sent to a place that only you can
bring me...

My brother, my brother were you heaven sent?
Those eyes sing the songs of days alone spent.
No smile on the African face.
Baby, give me the time and the place.
I'll let you reveal all that needs to be.
Alone, you will never be, with me.
I can't get you out of my mind.
Your breed, it's of some special kind.

When you talk, does every ear listen to your voice?
Viewing the six foot brother, does anyone have a choice?
His very being present, his regal moves.
His walk. His stride. He alone rules.

Don't want you near my heart.
Can't have you in that state.
Just need you in my mind.
Where I control fate.

Yes, this is when I picture you before me.
This is when the haunting starts.
I guess there's no hope for me.
You've gotten right to my heart.

Cyndia Romulus

The Choice

In my petty worries
of bland days-
daydreams more exciting,
I have thought often
of Heaven and Hell.
Sometimes saintly vices
inspire a warped sense of morality
and right.
Still sinful thoughts seep
through and to my despair
I sometimes welcome them.
The color of them do
by numbers paint adventures.
I try vaguely to repent
but I think it is forgiven-
If not
I know who I must answer to.

Oni Pendarvis

The Lonely Flower

In an open field,
Stood one single flower:
Alone,
Still.
No wind blowing to make her leaves tremble;
No one holding her, to admire her beauty;
No other flowers to accompany her.
Yet, she stood still in the brightness of the day,
Against the light, blue sky,
The fiery, yellow sun, and
The milky, white clouds
That hovered above.
She was proud of herself,
Knowing she was the only flower,
The only attraction,
On this pale field.
There she stood:
All alone and
Still.

Alba Negron

One Night Stand

For all it's worth-
I could promise you
my forever and sing a verse
or two with your name in every line.
Would it be worth it?
Would you promise to compromise
when my personality conflicts
with yours?
Will you trust me with your grocery list,
and not laugh when I improvise.
Would you understand if I dropped
your toothbrush down the sink
and forgot to tell you?
I could say that I love you
and whisper away my principles
as I allow you to change me in
subtle ways: from the socks I wear
to my hair style.
For all it's worth, you may give yourself
to me, and sacrifice some of yourself
by allowing me to take the place
of the monkey on your back.
But I'd rather not take the chance.
So wake up and get out.

Oni Pendarvis

Red Day

Red bandanas covered their heads,
For fun they'll shoot,
'til someone's dead.

His lifeless young body,
Lay there dead,
Blood poured from his chest,
The color, dark red.

Little boy from the Bodega,
Stares at the blood of his dead brother,
Tonight another, brown-skinned,
Mourning mother.

What a senseless act of violence,
Shot down at the park where he played,
Living in the 'Hood',
It's just another red day.

Jessica Sepulveda



"Untitled", Lorelle Graffeo

A Contract With Myself

There is an erroneous message
Which I learned long ago
From family, friends and teachers
That my body was my "foe."
Fear, shame and guilt prevailed
Throughout ensuing years
Only Anger and Resentment
Could control my lonely tears.
Quiet rage became a strong defense
Against those who brought me pain
And though I shone on the "outside"
In the "darkness" I remained.
Once in a while a helping hand
Tried to show me another way
But I was stuck with myself
In bitterness did I lay.
Child, sister, mother, wife and friend
Many hats did I wear
And when the roles were over
In the "darkness," I found despair.
When my father died, seven years ago
I found the "breaking ground"
And chose to live, instead of die
In this process, "Peace" I found.
At first acceptance of myself
Was impossible to find
Then I was asked to write a contract
That allowed me to use my mind:
"To Think, instead of fretting
To See in 'darkness' only light
To Learn new ways to cope with me
To Empower a sense of might.
No more stuffing from the outside
Or Damming up within
To Use my voice and take a risk
I Learned, this is no sin!
To Take each day for what it is
To Feel sunlight upon my face
To Smile and make a connection
To Join the Human Race.
To Breathe, to Smell, to Eat, to Live
These lessons I learned through this course
To Know my body is a 'friend' instead
As a guide and competent resource."
A "Wounded Healer" I now can turn
To those who walk the walk
And Serve as a companion
To Listen, instead of talk.

Missy Egan Wey

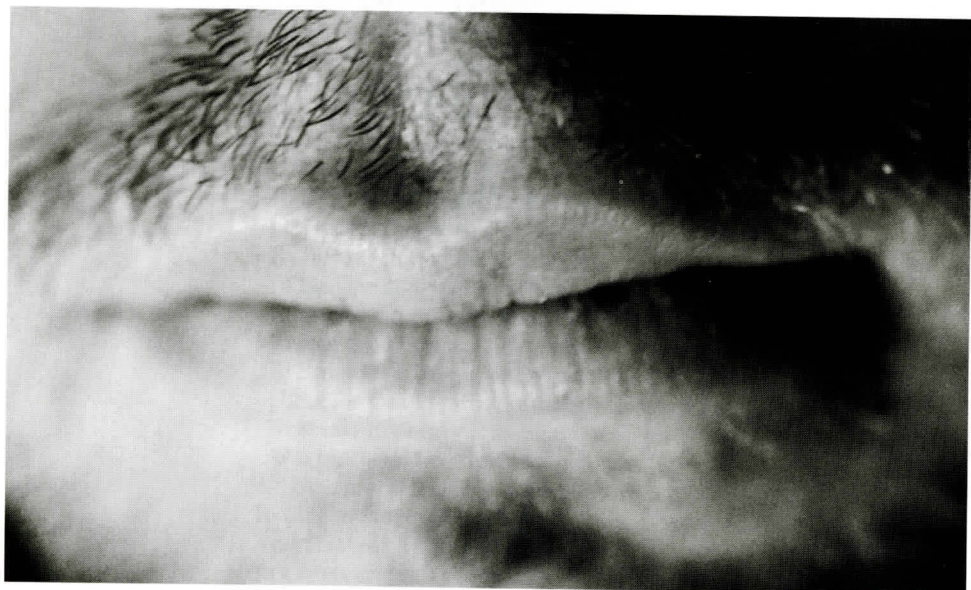
Nightmare

I stare up
looking at this
monstrosity of a blackboard
flat black reaching up and out
as far as I can see
the white scratchings on it
petrifies me;
I don't know what they say
only that it is a problem
that only I can solve
and as I feel the thousand eyes
of the classroom
beating against my back
all I want to do is
lay my head on the cool black expanse
and drag my fingernails
down the board
making the sound I hear
inside.

Katherine Williams



"Tim Murray's Eye" Maris Hampton



"Tim Murray's Mouth" Maris Hampton

To Know Him Is To Love Him

I am of a land that has dark roots
like the kinks in my hair
now straightened by the comb that burned my neck
the soil is rich and bears the gold that is now in my skin
and it shines
even through the cracks and ash
mama's mama's mama's mama's mama's
made me strong
carrying the burden
that was neatly planted by her man
and at night
mama braided her baby's hair cornrows
and now mama's man don't love or want her no more
cause the fields are seeded
and he feels his work is over
mama got raped
and worked her fingers to the bone
her man says she's mean
seduced by evil eyes
my daddy
too
ran off
but mama don't fret
'cause she knows
and she's too strong to cry
the woman with slick hair came
and she told my man
like she watched her husband steal my family
but daddy doesn't see his crown falling
meanwhile, mama knows
I grow bitter as the thieves get more upset with me
and my man can't understand
because he's lost and doesn't desire to be found anymore
my god said the devil's beauty is deceitful
and I know
but my son with no guidance cries
because daddy is gone
dancing with the devil
I love my man for all he is
and mama knows

Kalunda Jenkins

Another Night

"Hey, Babe! Let's dance!"

"No."

"C'mon, I know you want to..."

"I said 'no'." She turned from the sleaze of a man who was coming on to her. The man tried to follow her, but she was lost in the crowd. She moved her way to the bar and slid onto a stool that had just opened. The bass boomed loudly in her ears, hinting of the headache she would soon have.

She ordered a Long Island Iced Tea and looked at her companions at the bar. On either side of her sat two very young, very nice-looking men. They were staring at her, looking her over and approving what they saw. She rolled her eyes at their attempts at coolness, then moved herself and her Iced Tea to a table off to the right. As she moved, the heads of the young men moved with her. She ignored them.

She sat in the corner, alone. She watched the masses of beautiful people undulating to the music. Body pressed against body as the lights flashed and the smoke drifted over and around them, oblivious to the stray hands that roamed freely.

She noticed someone noticing her. He smiled eagerly and began to walk over to her. He was tall, nearly six feet, well dressed, and fit into the atmosphere of the club exquisitely. He stood before the table now, and she could clearly see his piercing blue eyes leering down at her. She met his gaze with a cold stare of her own. He sat down.

"I've been looking for you," his deep voice boomed over the music. The strobe lights started up, and she had to keep herself from wincing.

"You've been hiding from me."

"No," she said over the music, "You haven't been looking."

"Look, I didn't come here to play games."

"Could have fooled me," she said with a wry smile on her face.

"Where is it?" he leaned into her, and reached to grab her arm. She moved back slightly, just out of his reach.

"Do that again and you die," she said calmly, yet now he could see the gun she had pointed at his chest. She had pulled it out of her purse with such a subtle grace that no one else had been aware of the movement. Then again, no one else needed to know.

"You get what you want when I get what I want," she stated.

"Listen, sweetheart," he tried to sound agitated and dangerous at the same time. He wasn't very successful. "I didn't come here to be bossed around by some big-haired, skinny-a----d whore, so quit playing around, or you'll regret it."

"Oh, I'm sure," she shot back. Her headache was coming on full strength now. She did not want to put up with his machoisms. She stared at him a few seconds longer, just enough to make him fidget, and look away. She smiled.

"I will say this only once. You will give me money now, or you will not get anything."

The music had all but faded from his ears. He was intent on this young girl sitting in front of him. The short, tight, white dress she had on glowed in the club's multi-colored lights. Her hair was long, curly and dark, her face was perfect. Her drink sat untouched in front of her. The gun was still pointed at him with the unwavering confidence of one who was used to such machinery. He wondered if she could kill him. Probably. With an air of defeat, he reached for his wallet and produced several large bills. He laid them on the table for her to see. With one swift move, she swept the money off the table and left in its place a small white packet. He picked the packet off the table with eager fingers.

"That wasn't so bad now, was it?" she said. "The next time, don't be such a pig," But he didn't hear her. He quickly got up from the table and moved into a throbbing crowd where a group of three waited impatiently for him.

She shook her head, and with a quick movement, put the gun and the money into her purse. Her headache was pounding now. She downed her drink in four quick swallows. She got up from the table and made her way to the door. She chatted with the bouncer amiably for a moment, laughed, kissed him on the cheek, then got into the cab that had pulled up to the door of the club. She waved to the bouncer as the cab pulled away.

The only one who had been interested enough to see this whole transaction had been the bartender. It had taken no more than five minutes. The young man and his friends disappeared to the bathroom in the back. He continued to pour the drinks for the throngs of kids that surrounded the bar.

Katherine Williams

The Greatest Man

In my life
 I never knew
A man who
 is as great as you.
I don't know
 what I'd do
If I had to live
 without the love of you.

I don't know
 how I survived
How have I stayed alive?
 before I had
You by my side.

Jesus you have
 set me free
From the chains
 of slavery
From the pain
 in which I lived
You gave yourself
 so I could live.

In my heart
 it's you I praise
My broken spirit
 you constantly raise.
And when I'm low
 and feeling sad
Your love fills me up
 and makes me glad.
Thank you Jesus
 for being my eternal friend
You forgive my past
 and wash with blood
Away my sin.
 I pledge my love
Til this life's end
 you gave me power
To begin again.
 the lamb of peace
My rock and strength
 for life is good
And to you I owe thanks.

Cassandra Freeman

Attention

A Play in One Act

[Kitchen, 2 people enter. They are both dressed in “fancy” outfits, they appear to have just escaped from a party going on in the next room. SHELIA has a stain on the front of her dress]

SHELIA: We'll be right back. Just going to fix my dress, Mr. Parrish! (Pause) Ha-ha, you're a riot! (harshly to Casey) What do you think you're doing?!?!

CASEY: What do you mean?

SHELIA: I mean, that is my fiance you're hitting on.

CASEY: I'm not. I'm just trying to be friendly that's all.

SHELIA: Well you're drunk, and when you're drunk, you're too friendly.

CASEY: Maybe you are just jealous that he's paying more attention to me than to you.

SHELIA: How can he help it with you throwing yourself all over him?

CASEY: (Quietly) I'm not.

SHELIA: You seemed so happy this afternoon when I told you we were going to announce our engagement tonight. You even burst into tears.

CASEY: Well, you caught me at a really bad time.

SHELIA: After what Mrs. Hennigan said about fags and queers, I thought I should take you out the room before you started again.

CASEY: What? What did she say?

SHELIA: Something I knew you'd be upset with; I thought I should save everyone from the spectacle. . .

CASEY: Just because I fight for what I believe in.

SHELIA: No, you fight for what everyone else is against. If someone buys brand X cat food, you come up with a reason why they are poisoning their kitty unless they buy brand Y. The first time I met you at the tenants' meeting, you argued about the color of the new paint in the hallway.

CASEY: That putrid shade of green can make some of the older residents seasick.

SHELIA: Eighty-five year old Mr. Jones chose it!

CASEY: *His strong stomach will kill off half the old ladies in the building!*

SHELIA: (Quietly) Do you see what I mean? Every chance you get, you start an argument.

CASEY: I do not. (Pause)

SHELIA: Just to be different, just to cause a stir, just to get attention.

CASEY: Stop it, I've never started a discussion without believing in what I say. I don't fight unless there is a reason.

SHELIA: And finally, on one of the biggest social nights of my life, when I have my office superiors mingling

with my richest neighbors, just as I am about to announce my engagement, you begin ridiculing my boss's toupee!

CASEY: How was I to know it was already dead?

SHELIA: To get you out of there I had to spill water on my dress. It's not coming out!

CASEY: I put vodka in the Evian Bottles.

SHELIA: *O my God!* Does vodka stain? I'm so sick of your pathetic jokes! See what I mean-even my engagement party- you can't control yourself-

CASEY: *There are so many times when I could keep my mouth shut and I do.*

SHELIA: *Ugh!* Of all the apartments in this city, I had to move in next to yours! - Oh, I'm sorry. I mean you are my best friend, I love you dearly, and that's why I'm telling you this. Tonight I'm on the breaking point and I just can't take any more excitement.

CASEY: You're closer than a sister to me. Do you regret that?

SHELIA: Not at all. Sometimes I wish you wouldn't act like such a proud rooster who picks at everything that invades his territory.

CASEY: (With southern drawl) Still down on the farm? Huh, country girl?

SHELIA: *You never stop!*

CASEY: *I have my limits!* Sure I can tease, but when it comes to hurting someone I love...

SHELIA: That's *never* stopped you. You love telling people what they are doing wrong - what their lives *should* be like. You don't believe other people even deserve to have an opinion.

CASEY: I believe that some people don't take advice when they should.

SHELIA: I'm sick of it. If you give any more advice, or say one more thing to disrupt this evening, I'll hit you with every glass of Evian or vodka within reach!

CASEY: You're sure? What if I told you...

SHELIA: Forget it!! (exits)

CASEY: ...that he's cheating on you. That I can argue with anyone about their life except you. That you are the only person I can trust, but I can't tell you the truth about...

SHELIA: (from outside, sweetly) Casey, are you coming back in? Mrs. Hennigan wants to know.

CASEY: That most of all I can't be the one to hurt you. (To other room) *In a minute, I'm contemplating in which shade of orange you should redecorate this kitchen!*

RALPH: (Enters) I can help.

CASEY: Oh, *no* you can't.

RALPH: How about Candy-Corn?

CASEY: Would you *get out!*... Actually that isn't a bad idea...

RALPH: See, you *need* me.

CASEY: (stares) Haven't you done enough?

RALPH: I've made you happy, haven't I?

CASEY: Is this what you call happy?

RALPH: I meant that morning a few weeks ago, you had the biggest smile on your face when you woke up...

CASEY: I had no idea this party was to announce your engagement!

RALPH: Well, now she's happy too.

CASEY: I had *no* idea you two were more than acquaintances. When did you ask her?

RALPH: A few days ago.

CASEY: I should have said something...

RALPH: To her, no thank you.

CASEY: You mean she doesn't even know?

RALPH: No, and she's not going to find out either.

CASEY: We'll see about that-

RALPH: Don't you dare!

CASEY: Your "wife"-to-be doesn't have a right to your secrets?

RALPH: She doesn't need to be aware of all the skeletons.

CASEY: Shouldn't she know the important ones?

RALPH: What? And mess up our amazing love life?

CASEY: (Thoughtful shock) You've been sleeping together...

RALPH: Of course. And of course we'd keep our romance secret; it makes it more exciting.

CASEY: When did it begin?

RALPH: The first night took us both by surprise. You know the first time the elevator broke down a few months ago? Well, we got trapped in the elevator together and for the first time in two years broke the silence of elevator etiquette and actually began speaking. Since then we've had a lot of happy moments in that vertical-motion room.

CASEY: So that's why it keeps mysteriously breaking down all the time?

RALPH: You know it.

CASEY: But why didn't you tell me?

SHELIA: (enters) So what's the big pow-wow? *I'm not going to redecorate.* Are you guys coming in or what?

CASEY: We were just talking.

SHELIA: I just told everybody that I'm going to make the big announcement.

CASEY: Before you make it public, I want to say something...

SHELIA: Trying to get all the attention again, huh? Well nothing you can do can spoil my moment. I think we need more glasses for the champagne. About what?

CASEY: Well, actually I have a big announcement for the both of you.

RALPH: You're not going to...

SHELIA: This better be *boring*. Like...like...all the glasses we have are dirty.

CASEY: No. Actually, I saw a bunch of them set out on a tray over there on the counter. (SHELIA gets them)

SHELIA: Oh good. We haven't soiled ALL of them. The amount of liquor these people consume...

CASEY: It's more serious than those *stuffy alcoholics*!

RALPH: *Don't you dare!*

SHELIA: I *really* don't think I want to hear this...

CASEY: *I'm HIV positive!!!!!!!!!!*

(Silence, then SHELIA swoons, breaking a glass or two, RALPH supports her before she falls)

RALPH: O my god. O my god. O my god. O my god. O my god. O my god. (keeps muttering under the next few lines)

SHELIA: I'm so sorry. I had no idea. Why didn't you tell me?

CASEY: I found out today. That's why you caught me crying.

SHELIA: I'm so sorry I yelled.

CASEY: Don't worry about it, I just have one more thing to say...

SHELIA: I feel so terrible...

CASEY: (Aside) This will make you feel worse.

SHELIA: *My best friend...*

CASEY: Ralph and I have been having a casual affair... What was that, Mrs.Hennigton? (exits)

RALPH: I guess I'll go put the champagne back in the fridge. (exits)

(SHELIA is left alone, in shock, unmoving until she slowly lets the glasses smash to the floor and follows them, collapsing like a rag doll.)

Tamara Rose

Guardian

Overlooking the harbor...she stands.

Barefoot in her vigil of our American land.

Adorned head held high for all to see,
democracy at work in a free country.

With lighted torch that glows into the night
paving the way of often longed-for flight.

Overlooking the harbor...she stands.

From wind swept shores she faces you and me,
symbolizing the aspiration of our dreams of liberty.

Her lips forming 'silent' words of hope to the masses
of the tired, hungry and our poor,

but heard by all who never make it to freedom's door.

Her ears cradling the sounds of your tears and fears
today, tomorrow and the yesteryears.

'Seeing' eyes of vision capturing the images of your
innermost wishes.

Close to her being she holds us, whether near or far away.

Strengthening the bonds of communication between future
generations to seek a better day.

Overlooking the harbor...she stands.

But her reign is in our hearts.

Letitia Hepburn



"Untitled" Meghan Gilroy

Olodumare

Thank you Olodumare for the sun
that licks my shoulders
the melodies you send through the
breeze that kiss
my body continually with
its lullabies

Thank you Olodumare for the stars
that glisten on hot summer nights
their glow guides the moon
to my insides that lay
in wait for an ancestral spirit
to enter

Thank you Olodumare for the earth
upon which I stand
its foundation of fire and rock
the energies charging each chakra

Thank you Olodumare for the water
of which I am filled
it helps me to flow
and pat proper function on the back

I praise attraction through yellow baths of Honey,
white & yellow candles & Cinnamon incense

Thank you Olodumare for my essence
of Oshun the great Spirit of the river
for the Orisha
who are your powerful ones

Thank you Olodumare for allllowing me
to choose my destiny before coming
and just for allowing me to live

Paula Pryce

Love Is Forever

If you were to ask any of my classmates to describe me, Jessica Gordon, they would probably have to ask who I was. The few that know me, or think they do, might say I'm "smart, quiet, and withdrawn." No one has ever thought to inquire why. No one has the time, energy, or desire to get to know me. As far as they are concerned, I'm just another face in the crowd.

Strangely enough, I wasn't always like this. In the last school I attended, I was 'cool.' I had a reputation for being an excellent actress and an athlete. I was smart and popular; I hung out with the cool crowd. I had all the right clothes, the right hair, the right everything. Then I met him...

It all began the summer of my freshman year. I was working at the local day-camp and so was he. His name was Fred Fischer. We were acquaintances. We knew each other but never really talked.

The only real conversation I remember from that summer was his saying, "Yeah, if you really need a ride, Jessica, I can give you one." I refused, saying that he probably couldn't fit my bicycle into his car. For some reason his offer made me uncomfortable. But that thought was quickly dismissed when I looked and saw his gorgeous tan, his blue eyes, and his cool sunglasses. Everything about him was sexy.

The summer and fall flew by. But I was anxious for the stage. Theater was the most exciting and most rewarding activity I did. Things weren't great at home so I invested all of my time, anger, and frustration into those plays. I auditioned and received the part I wanted, which turned out to be the character opposite Fred.

As time went on I began to look forward to those rehearsals where I could be myself without having to worry about being judged by someone in my class. Everyday I'd find myself looking for Fred just to smile at me because I was too shy to say hello. I guess you could say it started to be the typical one-sided "crush."

As showtime grew near we became friends, as well as the best part of the show. Every time he touched me my whole body tingled.

For the last few minutes before our first performance, the cast gathered in a group hug. After that, Fred grabbed my hand and we held hands. For some reason, maybe it was because he was "taken," I felt guilty and let go.

At the cast party the following night there happened to be alcoholic beverages (like at most teenage parties). No one drank too much, but we were all tipsy enough to play Spin the Bottle. Ironically, everytime Fred spun the bottle it landed on me.

That night, after everyone went home, I broke down and told him I liked him, but not before I discovered he was having sex with his girlfriend, Elizabeth. However, as the night wore on and the discussion became more and more intimate, so did our feelings. We both began debating the basis of our morals, and finally, in a way, violated them. Nothing big, mind you. Just a kiss. But I have never found another whose kiss has felt the same.

After that kiss, I knew I loved him. I still tried to dismiss my feelings as infatuation. Fred became my constant confidant. I told him everything. Amazingly enough, he never held anything against me.

Two days after his graduation he called me and offered to pick me up after my finals the next day. I said, "wait, won't Elizabeth be angry?"

His response took me totally by surprise. "We aren't together. We broke up yesterday."

"Oh. Okay. I guess I'll see you around noon. Are we going anywhere?"

"Yeah, I thought we might go to the beach for a while and then catch an early dinner. Is that okay with you?"

"Sounds good." I hung up the phone and rushed upstairs to get ready for bed. The next day everyone was shocked. I had never been happier. That night was the best night of my life, and what I thought would be the beginning of the most romantic relationship I had ever dreamed of.

Although he would leave for college in two and a half months, we made the best of it. Every free moment was spent together, even into the early hours of the morning.

Nothing else mattered. I didn't want the summer to end. All I wanted to do was be with him; I wanted to have him hold me all night, or lie in his arms and look at the stars. It was the perfect romantic fantasy.

I suppose you're thinking that we were very close and that we shared everything, especially if we spent that much free time together. And, to be honest, I guess we did. I had grown to trust him as a lover (although we never made love upon my insistence). I even felt comfortable sleeping near him; I didn't fear that he would take advantage of me.

The summer was coming to a close and we both knew what that meant, so we tried to prepare ourselves for the parting. At the same time he began pressuring me into having sex with him, using the old "it could be the last thing we share together before I leave," or the ever famous "you trust me, don't you?"

Still I refused and he accepted it. So as our last night together approached I was trying to come to grips with the fact that I was losing the only person I truly loved and trusted.

That night as we walked through the woods to our special spot, holding hands and seeming happy under the circumstances, Fred asked me to make love to him using the same old reasons. Again I said "no".

We stopped at our destination and sat in the grass. Again he asked me to relent, but I stood my ground. Suddenly he became very angry, demanding that I have sex, and if not, he'd never talk to me again. Again I refused but then he became violent! I had never seen him act so aggressively. I was scared. He began to undo his pants...and pull them down. I just sat there, attempting to rationalize in my mind: I couldn't leave...he had the car...and I couldn't drive. I couldn't run; he was stronger than I was. I was dumbstruck; I didn't know what to do.

Then he yanked my shorts and underwear; pulling them down below my knees. He then forcefully pulled me to the ground. With all of his strength he held my body on the pine-needled floor. Harshly pushing himself into me, he tore my body apart. I could feel the blood running down my legs. I was crying now...I couldn't even talk to beg him to stop anymore. Thrusting himself up and down I began to feel myself shutting everything off. Everything had become black. There was no more sky, no more grass...there was nothing. Finally after what seemed like a lifetime I heard this soft crying... "Oh, please forgive me, Jessica. I'm so sorry! Please forgive me. I never meant to hurt you. I love you. You mean the world to me!"

He began to dress me and try to clean some of the blood. I was too weak to walk, so he carried me the two-and-a-half miles back to the car, crying and begging for forgiveness.

I knew I had just been raped, but I loved him with all my heart. So I just went home, went to sleep and tried to forget it. He left the next morning and I haven't heard from him since. He wrote me a couple of letters a while back but I just threw them in the trash.

As it turns out, six weeks later I found out that I was pregnant and had an abortion right away. Only one friend knows and she doesn't know about the rape, or that Fred was the father.

I tried to go back to school my junior year, but nothing was the same. All the things that mattered so much before didn't seem quite so important. I transferred to another school. This one is much bigger; now I am just another face in the crowd. I don't even act anymore; there are too many memories from the atmosphere of the stage.

It's been two years and I still cry myself to sleep at night. I graduate in three weeks. Ironically, my graduation is to be the same date as his was.

My heart still aches for him. He was the only one I thought I could trust, and look what happened! My heart had been broken before but *never* as shattered as it was that night. Since then I haven't really been able to trust anyone. I hardly ever talk to anyone these days. I just live in my own world, trying to survive and forget the only man I've ever known.

Meagan Batchelder

The Wink

My life, a new one.
My tricks, the same.
My lover, a different one.
Dancing to the same beat, holding someone new.
My heart beating wildly,
Waiting for that wink...
Just one wink...
I'll just sit here waiting.
Just one glance, come on, look this way...
She winked...
I looked into her eyes.
I see the reflection of me, looking back at her
Like a hungry cat, she caresses me.
Wanting more than my kisses.
Wanting to explore all the curves in my body.
I give in!...
Her body limped over mine.
Sweating under the rain.
She's all wet, just how I like it...
I approached her slowly
Teasing her...
Pleasing her...
Her sighs become moans.
Her moans become screams...
No more words were spoken!
The night was young,
And my lover...
Just a wink away...

Lyvett Elizabeth Velazquez

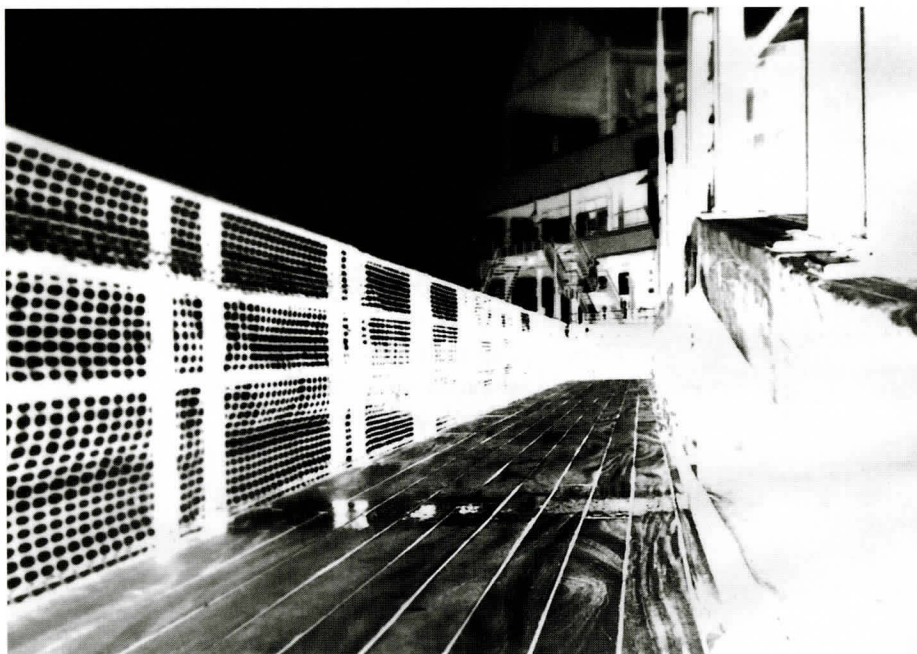
Look Into My Eyes

There's a fragment of my mind
that always pictures you and I
in a trance with locked eyes.

I look at you and you look at me.
But what exactly are we thinking?
I'll think of love that just can't be.
You'll think of words of pleasantry.
I'll long to gaze forevermore
You'll hope there's something more in store.
I'll think of standing in her place.
You're in these eyes and yet displaced.
I'd want to try and get inside.
You'd tumble to the hand of pride.
You'd want to play this game again.
I'd bring this game right to the end.
But will your eyes truly resist?
Or can I be first on your list?

Could I be your woman?
Would you be my man?
Look into my eyes.
Tell me you understand.

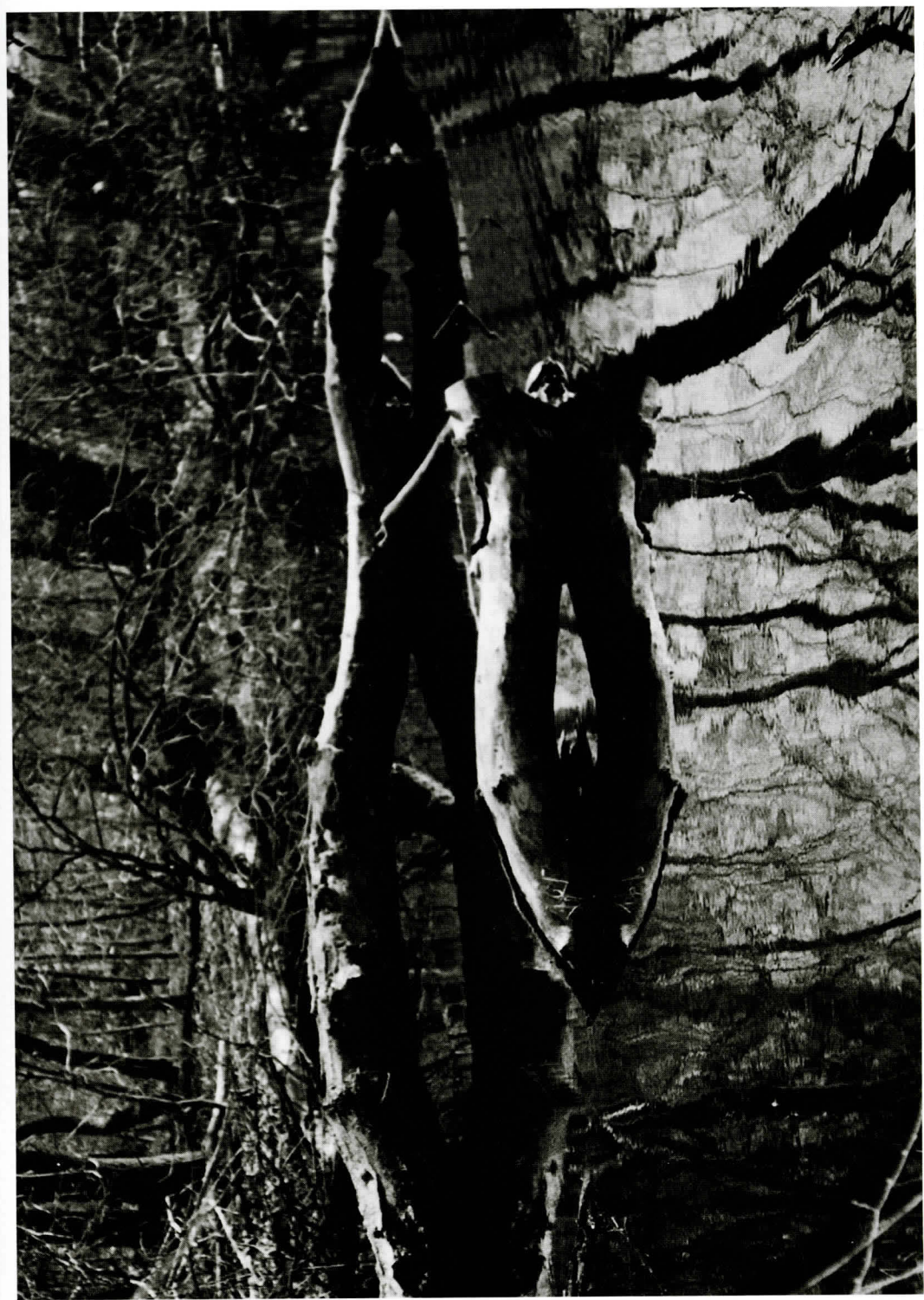
Cyndia Romulus



"Untitled", Lorelle Graffeo



"Untitled", Lorelle Graffeo



"Untitled" Meghan Gilroy

Nada

I shudder
At not knowing
Why in silence
The paper
Has its way
Staring as hard at me
As I at it
Content in the shadows
Of my pen

Orlando Warren

The Editors and Editorial Board of Phoenix

would like to thank those individuals

who have submitted their work

for publication in the 1996 Phoenix.

We hope that you enjoy reading

this issue which is full

of the talent and skill

that defines fine art.



*Obscene amounts of gratitude
are expressed towards those
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